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DECLASSIFIED AND RELEASED BY
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
SOURCE METHODS EXEMPTION 3B2B
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
DATE 2003 2006

E.O. 12356: N/A

BODY

TAGS: PREL, CASC, AU, BE

SUBJECT: VERBELEN CASE

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REF: STATE 190181

1. FOLLOWING IS THE JUNE 16 DOJ PRESS RELEASE ON THE
VERBELEN REPORT (REFTEL).

2. BEGIN TEXT:

ATTORNEY GENERAL EDWIN MEESE III TODAY DISCLOSED THE
RESULTS OF THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT'S FORMAL INQUIRY INTO
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND
CONVICTED NAZI CRIMINAL ROBERT JAN VERBELEN.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, WHO ISSUED A 92-PAGE REPORT ON THE
MATTER, SAID THE INVESTIGATION CONFIRMED THAT VERBELEN
ESCAPED TO AUSTRIA AT THE END OF WORLD WAR II AND, FROM
APPROXIMATELY 1946 UNTIL DECEMBER 1956, WORKED FOR THE

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U.S. ARMY'S COUNTER INTELLIGENCE CORPS (CIC) IN VIENNA.

VERBELEN MANIPULATED THE CIC INTO PROVIDING HIM SIGNIFICANT ASSISTANCE IN ESCAPING PUNISHMENT FOR HIS CRIMES, THE REPORT SAID.

HE WAS ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH THIS, SAID NEAL SHER, DIRECTOR OF THE CRIMINAL DIVISION'S OFFICE OF SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS (OSI), WHICH PREPARED THE REPORT, "AS A DIRECT RESULT OF THE CIC'S PRACTICE OF UTILIZING NAZI CRIMINALS AND THEIR COLLABORATORS IN ITS POSTWAR, COLD WAR, EUROPEAN INTELLIGENCE OPERATIONS."

THE REPORT FOLLOWED A TWO-YEAR INVESTIGATION THAT WAS ORDERED ON MARCH 30, 1984, BY STEPHEN S. TROTT, THEN THE ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL IN CHARGE OF THE CRIMINAL DIVISION. THE INQUIRY HAD BEEN REQUESTED BY THE ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE OF B'NAI B'RITH.

SHER SAID THE REPORT STATED THAT IN 1947 VERBELEN, WHO HAD COMMANDED A FLEMISH FASCIST SECURITY CORPS WHICH ATTEMPTED TO TERRORIZE THE BELGIAN POPULACE INTO ACQUIESCING TO THE NAZI OCCUPATION, WAS SENTENCED IN ABSENTIA TO DEATH BY A BELGIAN MILITARY COURT FOR THE MURDER OF 101 PERSONS.

VERBELEN'S PRESENCE IN VIENNA, AUSTRIA, BECAME KNOWN IN 1961, BUT BECAUSE HE HAD ACQUIRED AUSTRIAN CITIZENSHIP IN HIS TRUE NAME IN 1959, AUSTRIA, CITING PROVISIONS IN ITS LAW PROHIBITING THE EXTRADITION OF AUSTRIA CITIZENS, WAS UNABLE TO EXTRADITE HIM TO BELGIUM.

ALTHOUGH AN AUSTRIAN COURT FOUND IN 1965 THAT VERBELEN HAD INCITED THE MURDER OF TWO PERSONS, IT ACQUITTED HIM ON THE GROUNDS THAT HE HAD BEEN CARRYING OUT ORDERS FROM SUPERIORS. THE AUSTRIAN SUPREME COURT OVERTURNED THE ACQUITTAL, BUT VERBELEN WAS NEVER RETRIED. HE CURRENTLY LIVES IN THE VIENNA AREA.

THE PRINCIPAL AIMS OF OSI'S INVESTIGATION WERE TO DETERMINE:

- THE NATURE OF VERBELEN'S RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. GOVERNMENT;
- WHAT INFORMATION THE U.S. GOVERNMENT POSSESSED CONCERNING VERBELEN'S IDENTITY AND WARTIME ACTIVITIES AT THE TIME OF HIS CIC EMPLOYMENT; AND
- WHETHER ANY U.S. GOVERNMENT AGENCY OR OFFICIAL ASSISTED VERBELEN IN ESCAPING PUNISHMENT FOR HIS CRIMES.

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IN ADDITION TO THE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS CONCERNING

VERBELEN'S RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. GOVERNMENT, THE REPORT DISCUSSES THE GENERAL POLICIES AND PRACTICES OF U.S. MILITARY INTELLIGENCE WITH REGARD TO THE EMPLOYMENT OF NAZI CRIMINALS AND COLLABORATORS FOLLOWING WORLD WAR II.

SHER SAID OSI HAS DETERMINED THAT, ALTHOUGH THE COUNTER INTELLIGENCE CORPS EMPLOYED VERBELEN FOR 10 YEARS, IT DID NOT LEARN HIS TRUE IDENTITY UNTIL JUNE 1956. AT THE END OF WORLD WAR II, VERBELEN HAD APPARENTLY OBTAINED FALSE IDENTITY DOCUMENTS IN THE NAME OF PETER MAYER. WHEN HE MOVED TO VIENNA IN 1946, THE REPORT SAID, HE CAME INTO CONTACT WITH A GROUP OF FORMER MEMBERS OF THE NAZI PARTY, SS, AND GERMAN INTELLIGENCE SERVICES WHO WERE SUPPLYING INFORMATION TO THE 430TH CIC DEPARTMENT.

VERBELEN BEGAN WORKING AS A "SUB-SOURCE" FOR ONE OR MORE OF THESE INFORMANTS AND WAS INTRODUCED TO THE CIC AS AN ETHNIC GERMAN FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA WITH NO PRIOR POLITICAL OR MILITARY AFFILIATIONS, THE REPORT SAID.

BY 1946, VERBELEN, STILL USING THE MAYER ALIAS, HAD RISEN TO THE POSITION OF A CIC INFORMANT, RUNNING A NETWORK OF HIS OWN SUB-SOURCES WHICH SUPPLIED INFORMATION REGARDING SOVIET ACTIVITIES IN AUSTRIA AND THE AUSTRIAN COMMUNIST PARTY.

IN 1950, VERBELEN INFORMED THE 430TH CIC THAT HIS NAME WAS NOT PETER MAYER BUT HERBERT SCHWAB. HE ALSO SUPPLIED AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY, THE REPORT SAID, IN WHICH HE CLAIMED TO HAVE BEEN A DEVOTED MEMBER OF THE NAZI PARTY SINCE THE MID-1930S, AN SS OFFICER, AND A MEMBER OF THE SICHERHEITSDIENST (SD), THE SECURITY SERVICE OF THE SS. THE SS AND SD HAD BEEN DECLARED TO BE CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS BY THE INTERNATIONAL MILITARY TRIBUNAL AT NUREMBERG.

DESPITE THIS CHANGE IN IDENTITY AND LIFE HISTORY, THE 430TH CIC MADE NO ATTEMPT TO VERIFY THE INFORMATION VERBELEN SUPPLIED ABOUT HIMSELF, AND IT CONTINUED TO EMPLOY HIM, THE REPORT SAID. IN 1955, WHEN U.S. TROOPS WITHDREW FROM AUSTRIA, CONTROL OVER VERBELEN WAS TRANSFERRED TO THE 66TH CIC GROUP IN GERMANY, BUT THAT ORGANIZATION ALSO FAILED TO CONDUCT ANY INVESTIGATION OF VERBELEN'S BACKGROUND OR IDENTITY, IT SAID.

ON 15 JUNE 1956, VERBELEN, WHO WAS UNDER INVESTIGATION BY THE AUSTRIAN POLICE, FINALLY REVEALED HIS TRUE IDENTITY TO HIS CIC HANDLER, THE REPORT SAID. DURING THE FOLLOWING MONTH, IT SAID, THE 66TH CIC GROUP LEARNED THAT

VERBELEN'S TRUE IDENTITY AND HIS EMPLOYMENT WITH THE CIC

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WERE KNOWN TO BOTH THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY (WHICH SIMULTANEOUSLY INFORMED THE CIC OF VERBELEN'S WAR CRIMES CONVICTION) AND TO A WESTERN EUROPEAN INTELLIGENCE SERVICE. THE LATTER ORGANIZATION INFORMED THE CIC THAT IT WISHED TO EMPLOY VERBELEN, DESPITE THE FACT THAT HE WAS A CONVICTED WAR CRIMINAL. NO U.S. GOVERNMENT AGENCY MADE ANY EFFORT TO APPRISE BELGIAN AUTHORITIES OF VERBELEN'S WHEREABOUTS, THE REPORT SAID.

IN JULY 1956, THE CIC DECIDED TO DISMISS VERBELEN. A CIC REPORT OF JULY 25, 1956, STATED THAT THE DECISION WAS BEING MADE ON THE BASIS OF VERBELEN'S "LIMITED VALUE TO THIS ORGANIZATION ... HIS ILLEGAL STATUS IN AUSTRIA, AND ... THE FACT THAT HE IS A CONVICTED WAR CRIMINAL." HOWEVER, THE REPORT SAID, THE CIC DISMISSED VERBELEN "WITHOUT PREJUDICE" AND CLASSIFIED HIM AS "SUITABLE FOR INTELLIGENCE RE-EMPLOYMENT" SO THAT HE COULD WORK FOR THE WESTERN EUROPEAN INTELLIGENCE AGENCY, WHICH EMPLOYMENT PRESUMABLY WOULD PREVENT HIS BEING USED AGAINST AMERICAN INTERESTS.

THE CIC, ACCORDING TO THE REPORT, ENCOURAGED VERBELEN TO ACCEPT THIS EMPLOYMENT. THE REPORT SAID THAT THE CIA PLAYED A ROLE IN THE CIC'S DECISION TO TRANSFER VERBELEN TO THE WESTERN EUROPEAN INTELLIGENCE AGENCY. ULTIMATELY, VERBELEN FOUND EMPLOYMENT NOT WITH THE WESTERN EUROPEAN INTELLIGENCE AGENCY BUT WITH THE AUSTRIAN STATE POLICE, WHICH RECOMMENDED HIM FOR AUSTRIAN CITIZENSHIP IN 1959.

EVEN IF THE CIC HAD LEARNED VERBELEN'S TRUE IDENTITY WHEN IT FIRST BEGAN USING HIM IN 1946, IT PROBABLY WOULD NOT HAVE DISCOVERED THAT HE WAS WANTED FOR WAR CRIMES, FOR HIS NAME WAS NOT INCLUDED BY THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT OR ANY OTHER AUTHORITY ON ANY OF THE STANDARD WANTED LISTS EMPLOYED BY UNITED STATES AND OTHER ALLIED FORCES AT THAT TIME, THE REPORT SAID. A ROUTINE CHECK OF VERBELEN'S BACKGROUND WOULD HAVE REVEALED, HOWEVER, THAT HE HAD BEEN AN ORGANIZER OF THE FLEMISH SS AND HAD WORKED FOR THE SD, ACTIVITIES WHICH MADE HIM SUBJECT TO AUTOMATIC ARREST, THE REPORT SAID.

THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT SUCH AN EFFORT WAS MADE BY THE CIC, THE REPORT SAID. INSTEAD, IT SAID, FOR 10 YEARS, THE CIC APPARENTLY RELIED ALMOST ENTIRELY UPON THE INFORMATION VERBELEN SUPPLIED IT ABOUT HIS NAME AND PAS ACTIVITIES.

"THE FACTS INDICATE THAT, IN ALL PROBABILITY, REVELATION

OF VERBELEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE SS AND SD PROBABLY WOULD NOT HAVE PRECLUDED HIS BEING USED AS A CIC INFORMANT IN 1946." SHER STATED. "IN FACT, VERBELEN'S FIRST CIC HANDLING AGENT BELIEVED THE INFORMANT HE KNEW AS HERBERT

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TO BE AN SS OFFICER TRYING TO AVOID ARREST."

ALTHOUGH APPREHENDING PERSONS SUBJECT TO AUTOMATIC ARREST WAS PART OF ITS RESPONSIBILITY, THE CIC, LIKE THE INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATIONS OF ALL THE POWERS OCCUPYING GERMANY AND AUSTRIA AFTER WORLD WAR II, EMPLOYED NUMEROUS INFORMANTS WHO HAD SERVED IN THE NAZI PARTY OR SS, ACTIVELY COLLABORATED WITH NAZI GERMANY, OR WERE WANTED FOR WAR CRIMES, THE REPORT SAID. THIRTEEN EXAMPLES OF SUCH PERSONS WHO WERE INFORMANTS FOR THE 430TH CIC DETACHMENT IN AUSTRIA ARE GIVEN IN THE REPORT. IN SOME INSTANCES, THE REPORT SAID, THE CIC TOOK STEPS TO PROTECT SUCH INFORMANTS FROM BEING ARRESTED.

ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT THE CIC KNEW VERBELEN'S TRUE IDENTITY WHEN IT FIRST EMPLOYED HIM, OR AT ANY TIME PRIOR TO JUNE 1956, THAT EMPLOYMENT DID ENABLE HIM TO SUPPORT HIMSELF, TO OBTAIN FALSE IDENTITY DOCUMENTS SO THAT HIS PRESENCE IN VIENNA REMAINED UNDETECTED, AND TO DEVELOP THE CREDENTIALS OF AN EFFECTIVE INTELLIGENCE OPERATIVE, THE REPORT SAID. BY THIS MEANS, IT SAID, HE OBTAINED EMPLOYMENT WITH THE AUSTRIAN STATE POLICE AND, EVENTUALLY, AUSTRIAN CITIZENSHIP.

END TEXT OF PRESS RELEASE. SHULTZ

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